

**The Role of Independent Colleges and Universities
in Preparing Teachers for California Schools**

Testimony presented to the Little Hoover Commission

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Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I am Carol A. Bartell, Dean of the School of Education at California Lutheran University. I represent the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities as Ex-Officio Member of the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

My presentation will focus on the role and unique contributions of the independent colleges and universities in preparing teachers for California Schools. I will also present some policy recommendations that our institutions believe will enhance the role that we already play and allow us to prepare a stronger teacher workforce for California's schools.

Teacher Preparation at the Independent College or University

There are forty-five independent colleges and universities in California that recommend candidates for credentials that authorize teaching and other services in public schools. These institutions are subject to the same accreditation process and standards as are the public institutions. Our institutions must first meet regional accreditation standards (WASC) and then meet all requirements established by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. Our programs are submitted for approval by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing and our institutions are subject to on-site program evaluations every 5-6 years, just as the public institutions.

Most of the forty-five independent institutions have long traditions and deep commitments to teacher preparation. Independent Institutions in California play a significant role just in the sheer *numbers* of teachers prepared. For the most recent year for which data were available (1998-99), independent institutions recommended 7804 students for multiple subject, single subject or special education credentials. This represents 40% of all the first time credentials or new type of credentials issued that year. (The CSU's recommended 10,682 and the UC's recommended 965 during that same period of time).

Independent institutions in California have experienced a steady growth in enrollment at both the undergraduate and graduate/professional levels in recent

years. However, it is at the graduate/professional level, most notably in teacher education that the growth has been most rapid.

This enrollment growth has occurred despite the fact that students pay significantly higher costs at an independent institution than they would at a publicly funded college or university. Although independent institutions have attempted to keep costs affordable and make financial assistance available, our institutions continue to be largely tuition-driven and have become even more so in recent years.

Strengths of the Independent Institutions

When the Commission on Teacher Credentialing began its comprehensive review of the teaching credential several years ago, the deans and directors of the independents met to consider the role of our institutions and to make recommendation for change that we might make to those who were to influence the future direction of that preparation.

The independent institutions are probably characterized more by the diversity of their programs rather than similarities. Despite the differences in mission, geographic location, size, and type of program offered, there were some commonalties identified in our discussions of the question: ***What special contributions or unique perspectives do we contribute to teacher education in California.***

A clearly articulated mission. Independent colleges and universities were founded with a sense of purpose and fill a well-defined niche in the higher education community. Many of the independent institutions are church-related, and see education as part of their broader commitments to society. Some independent institutions have been founded to offer particular educational alternatives in curricular offerings or in modes of delivery. This mission is clearly conveyed and communicated to students.

A moral and ethical dimension. Independent institutions often are very clear about the moral and ethical dimension of schooling and recognize their responsibilities to prepare not only well-qualified educators, but educators who exercise sound and responsible judgment, and educators who teach and lead with a sense of commitment and purpose. There is a underlying value orientation that permeates the learning experience and the practice of the profession. All students are valued for their individual contributions, for their many diversities, and for what they have to offer to their schools and to their communities.

A service orientation. The ethos of the independent institution fosters commitment and service. The university experience is intended to do more than prepare one for work; it is a preparation to make a contribution to one's community. Teachers are expected to be not only highly skilled educators, but fully responsible educators who give of themselves to their students.

A highly committed, well-qualified student population. Students who select an independent college or university are typically academically well-qualified and highly motivated. The choice is made in a very deliberative manner, largely because of the significant investment of funds required. Students will invest the funds only if they see the value of the education they will receive and quite committed to pursuing teaching as a career.

Personal attention. Small classes, easy access to university services and advisors, and professional mentoring all contribute to the establishment of a caring and nurturing environment. Independent institutions are generally client-oriented and feel the need to be welcoming of and responsive to students.

Emphasis on teaching. Good teaching is practiced and modeled for students. Teaching is recognized and rewarded in independent colleges and universities. Students expect faculty to be well-informed, well-prepared, and to provide ongoing feedback to students. Many independent institutions have established strong faculty development programs to foster teaching expertise.

Alternative programs and approaches to delivering instruction Many promising and innovative practices and approaches to preparing educators have been initiated at independent institutions. There is often institutional willingness and support for experimentation with alternative delivery approaches and new practices.

Respected place in the institution. In most independent institutions, education is highly regarded and is seen as making an overall contribution to the quality and reputation of the institution. Faculty in education are active participants in the university governance structure and interact on a regular basis with faculty in other schools and departments. Knowledge of the teaching/learning process possessed by education faculty is recognized institution-wide.

Institutional loyalty and commitment. Students who attend the independent institution have strong loyalties to the program and to the institution. They become leaders in the profession and are actively involved alumni. These continuing

commitments lend strength and further mentoring opportunities for current and future students, who experience contact with the successful professionals who have gone before them.

Professional and scholarly contributions. Faculty make strong contributions to professional knowledge and practice that extend beyond the walls of their own institutions. They are actively engaged in professional organizations, in conducting research, in writing scholarly articles and books, and in presenting their work in a variety of arenas.

Embracing of diversity. California's independent colleges and universities have recognized and embraced the challenge of responding to the many diversities of the student population. Issues of diversity permeate curriculum in teacher preparation programs.

Connections between subject matter and professional programs. Education faculty and faculty responsible for subject matter preparation are colleagues who know each other, respect each other's professional knowledge and expertise, and work together on behalf of the student. This allows for strong connections between the subject matter and professional preparation of prospective teachers, especially those who are identified early.

Institutional support for innovation and change. Independent institutions implement change in a relatively short period of time. Resource limitations are more of a barrier than bureaucratic or structural limitations. The organizational, professional, and intellectual climate fosters continual striving for improvement.

Policy Considerations

California's independent institutions make a significant contribution to teacher education in California. Those strengths and contributions should be considered as we seek to reinvent the future of teacher education in California. Other considerations are identified below.

The rising cost of higher education. Earlier, the tuition driven nature of the independent colleges was highlighted. Many students have difficulty paying the costs associated with attendance at an independent institution. Programs that become more costly because they are longer in duration will decrease the number of students that will be able to avail themselves of these opportunities. The

independent institutions are well-positioned to offer unique, carefully designed programs and to implement reforms in a timely and thoughtful way. These strengths ought to be nurtured, further supported, and fostered in every way possible. State-funded incentive programs to attract and enhance teacher preparation and should be made available to public and private institutions alike.

The diversity of contemporary higher education. Higher education in California is characterized by institutions that vary in size, type, and scope, and particular focus. Teacher education exists in small liberal arts institutions, in comprehensive institutions, and in research oriented institutions. The character of the institution helps to shape and support the goals of teacher education. An new system for credentialing should recognize this diversity and draw on the strengths that each type of institution has to offer. Standards that narrow this focus rather than enhance the strengths of this diversity do not serve anyone well. There are multiple paths to excellence.

Positive reforms in teacher education. Teacher education has changed significantly in recent years, and many positive innovations have originated in California. California teacher educators in both public and independent institutions are seen as leaders in national arenas and have made a significant contribution to the growing knowledge base and research literature on the development of teaching. Any new reforms should draw on that existing knowledge base and a thorough understanding of practice.

The needs of California schools. Teacher education institutions do not currently prepare the numbers of teachers required to meet the high demands of California schools. Class size reduction only intensified the need for fully qualified teachers. Yet, all teachers should be well-prepared to deliver high quality instruction to all students in California. While alternatives to sound preparation help to satisfy short-term, immediate staffing needs, such approaches shortchange California students. Alternative routes are needed, but not at the expense of California's children. The public ought to feel confident that all teachers in California classrooms are well-prepared for their assignments and continue to pursue their own learning.

Recommendations

Independent colleges and universities have suggested that new teacher preparation system should:

- integrate the study of subject matter, pedagogy, and professional practice;
- be flexible but rigorous; allow for a variety of entry points and preparation options but be guided by a common set of standards and expectations for all candidates;
- provide increased incentives and opportunities for all higher education institutions to partner with K-12 schools;
- focus attention on early recruitment efforts and initial pre-service exposure to classroom teaching;
- encourage and fund alternative forms of teacher preparation to attract and accommodate a more diverse candidate pool;
- include viable options and funding for adult career changers;
- give intentional focus to values, character education, and the ethical and moral dimension of teaching;
- include a planned induction period for all new teachers supported by state funding for a university role in this induction process;
- engage the wider educational and professional community in teacher education activities;
- be guided by a consideration of the developmental nature of learning-to-teach;
- provide for multiple points at which teacher performance is assessed in a variety of ways;
- include clinical experiences that are well planned and supervised;
- require a training component for supervisors and master teachers;

- recognize the contributions of classroom teachers to preparing and mentoring student/beginning teachers;
- include a mechanism for exchange of ideas and sharing of “promising practices” among teacher educators; and
- recognize the richness and diversity of California’s students and schools and the contributions that a variety of institutions can play in teacher preparation, induction, and professional development.